



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: May 28, 2020

Agenda Item: Montana Bovine Tuberculosis Surveillance Plan for Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background: Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) is a bacterial disease caused by *Mycobacterium bovis* (*M. bovis*). Bovine TB is primarily a disease of cattle but can affect many other species of mammals. The disease can spill over from livestock to wildlife, which can then serve as a reservoir, potentially transmitting the disease to other uninfected wildlife, cattle, and, in some cases, humans. States with bTB cases in cattle and/or wildlife experience significant negative economic impacts on the livestock industry and are subject to increased regulation and requirements for interstate movement of livestock.

Mycobacterium bovis infection typically causes chronic, progressive disease in cervids. There are no documented cases of bTB causing cervid population declines. The impacts of aggressive management in endemic areas often have a much greater impact on deer survival than mortality resulting from this chronic disease. The primary motives for surveillance and early detection of bTB in wildlife include the potential for wildlife species to serve as a reservoir for transmission to cattle, the major economic consequences to the cattle industry that would come with loss of bTB-free status, the potential for human health impacts, decreased tolerance for infected wild cervid populations on the landscape, and the major expense and aggressive nature of managing the disease once established in wild populations.

If bTB were to become endemic in wildlife populations, the cost of management would drastically increase and the likelihood of eradicating the disease would decrease. The goals of FWP's current bTB Surveillance Plan include preventing spillover of the disease to wildlife, early detection to prevent the disease from becoming endemic in wildlife, and preparing to respond if needed.

Public Involvement Process & Results: This plan was developed by FWP's wildlife health program staff with review and input from other FWP staff, Montana Department of Livestock, and USDA APHIS. The plan was available for comment through Monday, November 18, with four comments received and forwarded to the commission. The comments included support, concern for wildlife and livestock alike, and recognition that controlling this disease is good for wildlife as well as livestock.

Alternatives and Analysis: The proposal reflects considerable multi-agency input already and may ultimately be adopted as presented or with adjustment per public comment and commission discussion.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the draft Montana Bovine Tuberculosis Surveillance Plan for Wildlife be adopted. Without a specific plan to survey for bTB and respond to detection, FWP will be ill-prepared to manage a disease that can have a substantial impact on Montana's wildlife, livestock, and economy.

Proposed Motion: I move that the Montana Bovine Tuberculosis Surveillance Plan for Wildlife as proposed by FWP be adopted as final.